

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8901

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JUDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

S E C R E T ADDIS ABABA 4321

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJ: FONMIN COMMENTS ON SUDAN AND ERITREA

1. DURING CALL ON FONMIN KIFLE APR 8, CHIEFLY TO DISCUSS
PRESS GUIDANCE ON DELIVERY OF F-5E'S, KIFLE MADE FOLLOWING STATE-
MENTS, MOSTLY IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTIONS.

2. HE SAID HIS RECENT VISIT TO SUDAN HAD BEEN FOR PURPOSE OF
DISPELLING MINUNDERSTANDINGS AND TO EXPLAIN RECENT "INCIDENTS"
(READ EPMG OVERFLIGHTS AND STRAFINGS IN SUDAN). HE SAID THIS
MISSION HAD BEEN SUCCESSFUL, AND THAT ATMOSPHERE BETWEEN TWO
COUNTRIES NOW MUCH BETTER. (COMMENT: WE HAVE HEARD THIS FROM
OTHERS HERE ALSO, AND KHARTOUM'S COMMENT IS SIMILAR. IN ADDITION,
WE HEARD THAT EPMG HAD BEEN CONCERNED AT REPORTS OF SUDANESE
TROOP MOVEMENTS AND MOBILIZATION NEAR BORDER, AND IS NOW
SATISFIED THERE IS NOT AGGRESSIVE SUDANESE INTENT; THUS EPMG
ALSO GAINED BETTER UNDERSTANDING AS RESULT OF VISIT.)

3. HE SAID ELF AND PLF REPS HAD HAD MEETING IN KHARTOUM BUT FAILED
TO AGREE ON NUMBER OF POINTS. CHIEF OBSTACLE WAS WIDENING SPLIT
BETWEEN EXTERNAL AND MILITARY WINGS OF PLF WHICH PREVENTED UNIFIC-
ATION OF MOVEMENT. THIS SPLIT WAS NOT ONLY ON PERSONALITY GROUNDS,

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BETWEEN OSMAN AND ISAIAS AFEWERK, BUT HAD RACIAL AND RELIGIOUS

OVERTONES. PLF MILITARY WING IS INCREASINGLY CHRISTIAN (AND MARXIST) AND DISINCLINED TO FOLLOW POLICIES AND INSTRUCTIONS FROM MUSLIM OSMAN, WHOSE CONNECTIONS WITH ARABS ARE "USEFUL" BUT SEEN AS TOO DEPENDENT BY MILITARY WING. PLF MILITARY HAS A PROBLEM WITH PROPOSED MERGER WITH ELF. MOVEMENT WOULD THEN HAVE EXCLUSIVELY MUSLIM/ARAB CAST. ISAIAS IS DETERMINED TO WITHDRAW "MANDATE" OF OSMAN TO SET POLICY AND NEGOTIATE WITH ARAB SUPPLIERS, AND HAS REPUDIATED SEPTEMBER UNIFICATION AGREEMENT. ISAIAS WOULD IN FUTURE RELY LESS ON ARAB SUPPLIERS THROUGH OSMAN, AND WOULD LOOK ELSEWHERE. TO MY QUERY KIFLE ANSWERED HE WOULD INCREASINGLY HAVE TO LOOK TO SOMALIA AS A SUPPLIER. DURING DISCUSSION HE AGREED THAT THESE DEVELOPMENTS MADE A SEARCH FOR A POLITICAL SOLUTION HARDER, AND HE SAID EPMG HAD "NOTHING TANGIBLE TO WORK WITH".

4. KIFLE SAID OSMAN HAD CIRCULATED A DOCUMENT DURING THE ELF/PLF MEETINGS IN KHARTOUM CONCERNING RELATIONS BETWEEN WHAT KIFLE CALLED "OUTSIDERS" (OSMAN) AND "INSIDERS", AND APPARENTLY STATING INTER ALIA THAT OUTSIDERS WERE SEVERING ALL LINKS WITH INSIDERS. (COMMENT: THIS PRESUMABLY SAME DOCUMENT THAT EMB KHARTOUM HAS COPY OF AND IS FURNISHING GIST.)

5. KIFLE ASKED IF WE HAD ANY FURTHER WORD ON RELEASE OF AMERICAN HOSTAGES. IS SAID WE HAD NOT, BUT WERE STILL HOPING FOR RELEASE, AND THAT DELIVERY OF F-5E'S WOULD TAKE PLACE AS NOW SCHEDULED.

6. COMMENT: KIFLE'S REMARKS CONTAIN NOTHING SUBSTANTIVELY NEW EXCEPT PERHAPS HIS SPECULATION THAT ISAIAS OF PLF WOULD SEEK ARMS AND SUPPORT FROM SOMALIA INSTEAD OF FROM TRADITIONAL ARAB SUPPLIERS. WHAT IS SIGNIFICANT, HOWEVER, IS THAT THIS IS FIRST TIME WE HAVE HAD SUCH FORTHCOMING DISCUSSION AT HIGHER LEVELS OF EPMG ON TENSIONS AND CHANGES WITHIN INSURGENT MOVEMENT. KIFLE AND OTHERS HAVE USUALLY BEEN DISINCLINED TO EXPLAIN WHATEVER THEY KNEW ABOUT SUCH MATTERS; PERHAPS KIFLE GOT FROM SUDANESE AND FROM ETHIOPIAN AMB IN KHARTOUM MORE DETAILED INSIGHTS THAN WERE AVAILABLE IN EPMG BEFORE.
HUMMEL

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